

# A Force Multiplier in Indiana: The Military Family Research Institute

Force Health Protection Conference

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# ***What is the Military Family Research Institute?***

- **A research and outreach organization at Purdue**
  - **Land Grant Institution in Indiana**
- **Created in 2000**
  - **Office of Military Community and Family Policy in OSD;**
- **Current Funders**
  - **Lilly Endowment, Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, DoD, Sesame Workshop, Zero to Three, UCLA, and others.**

# Strategic Goals of MFRI

- **Support military communities**
- **Strengthen civilian communities**
- **Generate important new knowledge**

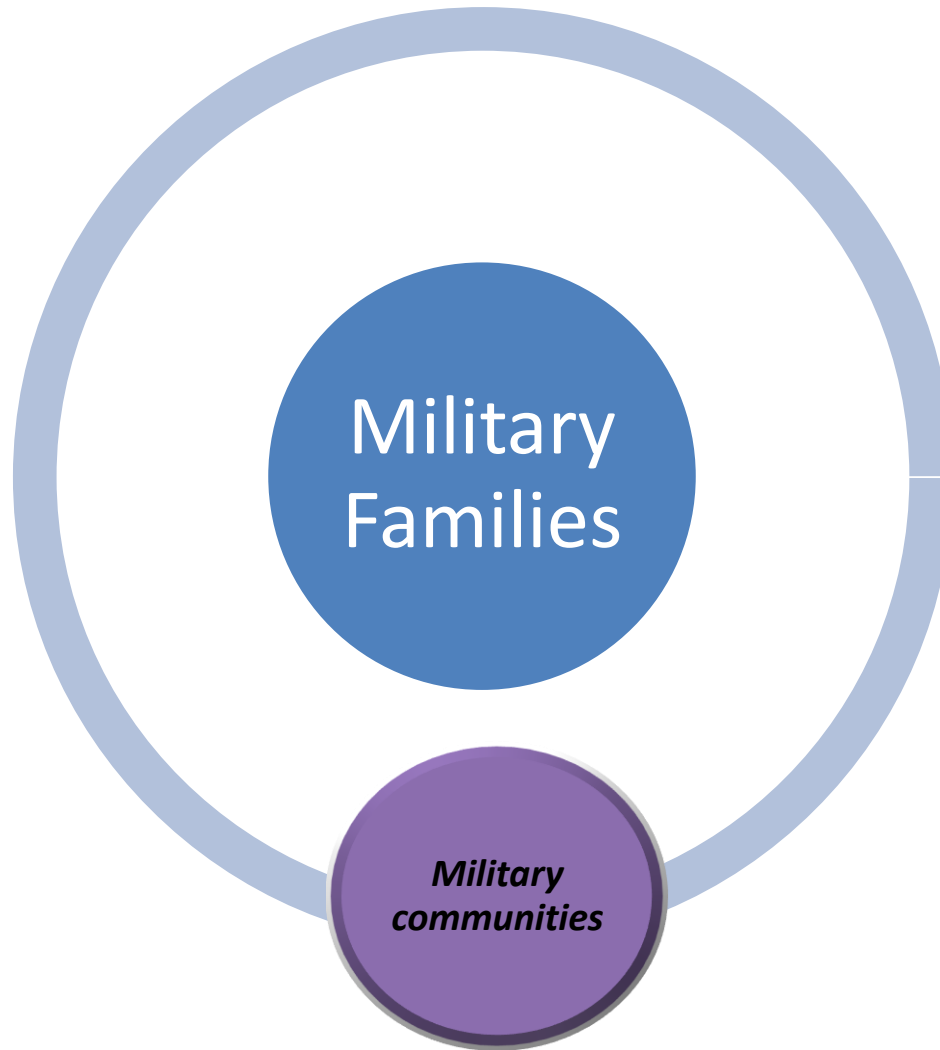
# ***Shelley MacDermid Wadsworth***



# MFRI as a Force Multiplier



# Support to Military Communities



# PASSPORT



## toward success

Helping Military Kids and Families Connect

Military  
communities

# Passport to Success: Research Background

- ▶ Content of activities based on family resilience model
- ▶ Resilience = “the ability to withstand and rebound from disruptive life challenges” (Walsh, 2003, p. 1).
- ▶ Family Resilience Model assumes:
  - The entire family is affected by challenges/stressors
  - Key family processes (e.g., connection, problem solving) mediate the adaptation of all family members
  - Strengthening key processes/skills aids families in being resilient

## Family Resiliency

- ▶ Format of activities based on cognitive-social learning model for social skills
- ▶ 3 key steps (Choi & Kim, 2003)
  - Define/provide examples of social skill
  - Promote rehearsal of skill in enjoyable (game-like) contexts
  - Lead discussion on generalizing skill (e.g., to situations at home)

## Cognitive-social model of skills training



# “Passport Toward Success” Structure

## When:

- *In the morning*, children participate in activities while parents are completing the seamless transition activities.
- *Following the child program*, parents participate in activities with their children.

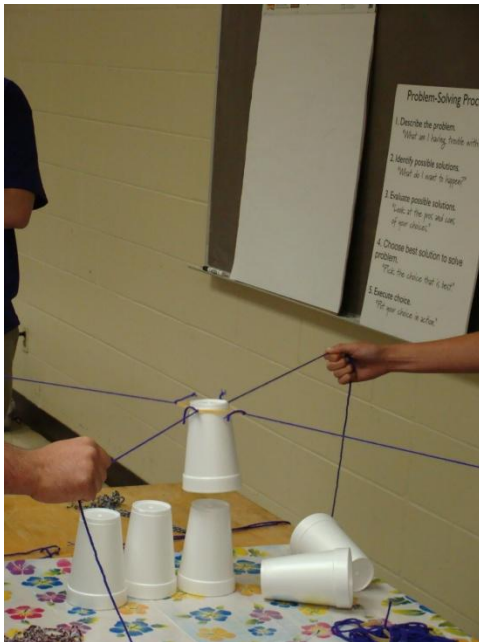
## How:

- Children are given a “passport” and are divided into age groups: 5-8, 9-12, and 13+.
- The groups will rotate through different “Islands” engaging in activities.
- Children receive a stamp for their passport after each activity is completed.
- Families receive additional stamps as they complete each family activity.

# Sample Activities

- Cup Stacking

Create a pyramid without using your hands







- Block Talk

Create identical block structure without looking



## Objectives

## Outcomes

- Increase capacity to share and respond to feelings  Improved sense of connection among family members
- Foster closer ties to family, friends and community.  Increased understanding about benefits of appropriate communication
- Promote strategies to attend to physical, mental and emotional needs.  Increased use of coping skills among family members
- Increase capacity to share and respond to feelings.  Increased awareness of emotional needs

# Passport Toward Success: “Islands”

## Island

## Objectives and Activities

### Feelings

Objectives: ↑ capacity to share and respond to feelings. ↑ connection to family.

Skills: Appropriate expression of emotions/feelings

Sample Activities: Reunion Poster, Family Pyramid

### Relaxation

Objectives: teach strategies for identifying healthy outlets to reduce stress

Skills: Relaxation strategies, coping skills

Sample Activity: My strength box

### Communication

Objectives: ↑ capacity to problem solve, ↑ communication and listening skills

Skills: “I” statements, problem-solving steps

Sample Activities: Block talk, Fly Swatter Hockey

# Supporting Chaplains

- Respite and retreat
- Mobilizing civilian pastors
- Engaging faith communities



Military  
communities

Civilian  
Communities  
- professional



# Operation Purple Camp

Military  
communities









# Leadership Training for Family Readiness Group Leaders



Rodney Vandever

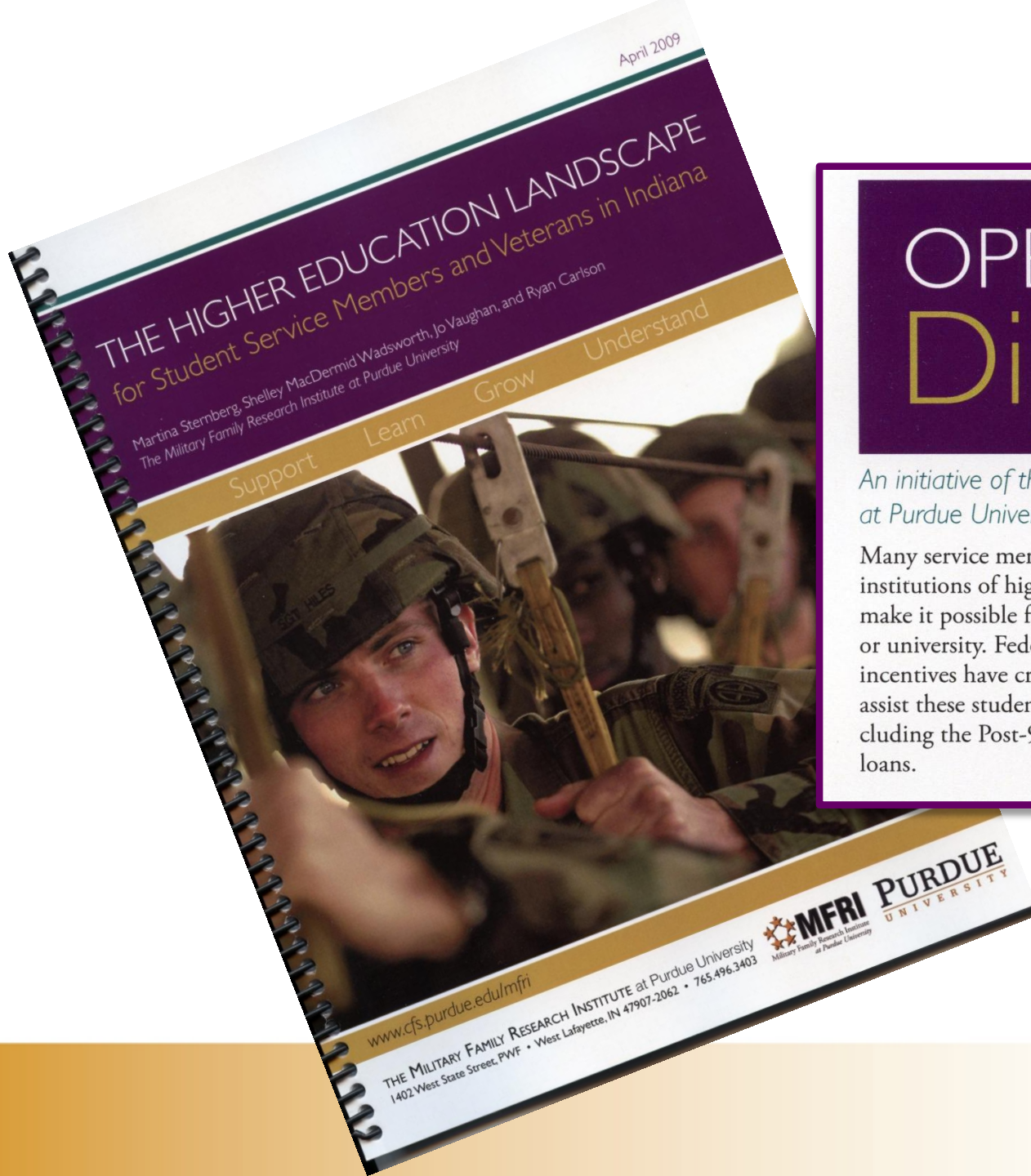
Military  
communities



A person wearing camouflage pants and black boots is standing on a stack of five books. A green apple is placed on top of the books. The background is white.

# **Operation Diploma**

**Promoting academic  
success by supporting  
institutions of higher  
education and student  
veterans' organizations**



# OPERATION Diploma

*An initiative of the Military Family Research Institute  
at Purdue University*

Many service members and veterans are students in institutions of higher education, and GI Bill benefits make it possible for them to enter or re-enter college or university. Federal statutes and military enlistment incentives have created significant funding structures to assist these students in paying for higher education, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill and forgiveness of student loans.

# Operation Diploma Goals



## **Educate**

institutions about needs/concerns of student service members and veterans.

## **Engage**

institutions in strengthening support and services for these students.

## **Enrich**

the efforts of student veteran organizations' (SVOs) across the state.

## **Generate**

new knowledge about the experiences of student veterans and effective strategies for helping them.

# Operation Diploma Impact

- Nearly 25% of Indiana colleges and universities were awarded Year1 grants totaling more than \$270,000 to create or enhance services.
- Year 2 grants, totaling \$1.1 million, have been awarded to 33 schools. 93 campuses have received site visits, consultation or other evidence-based resources.
- A longitudinal e-survey of 357 military and civilian students on Indiana campuses was launched in Fall '09. The second of 3 waves was completed in Spring '10



# Operation Diploma Impact

- Consulted with ITCC to conduct a system-wide assessment of policies, programs, and practices.
- Awarded more than \$25,000 to Student Veterans Organizations throughout Indiana
  - Co-sponsored the Student Veterans of America Midwest regional conference
- Hosted a national Service Members Opportunity Colleges (SOC) workshop
- Partnering with Indiana Commission for Higher Education to enhance higher education resources for student service members and veterans

# Operation Diploma Impact

- Provided financial and consultation support to statewide community-campus awareness raising and resource events.
- Hosted a national Service Members Opportunity Colleges workshop
- Partnering with Indiana Commission for Higher Education to enhance higher education resources for student service members and veterans

# Operation Diploma Impact



- \$25,000 awarded to statewide SVOs in
- 43% increase in number of statewide SVOs since June 2009

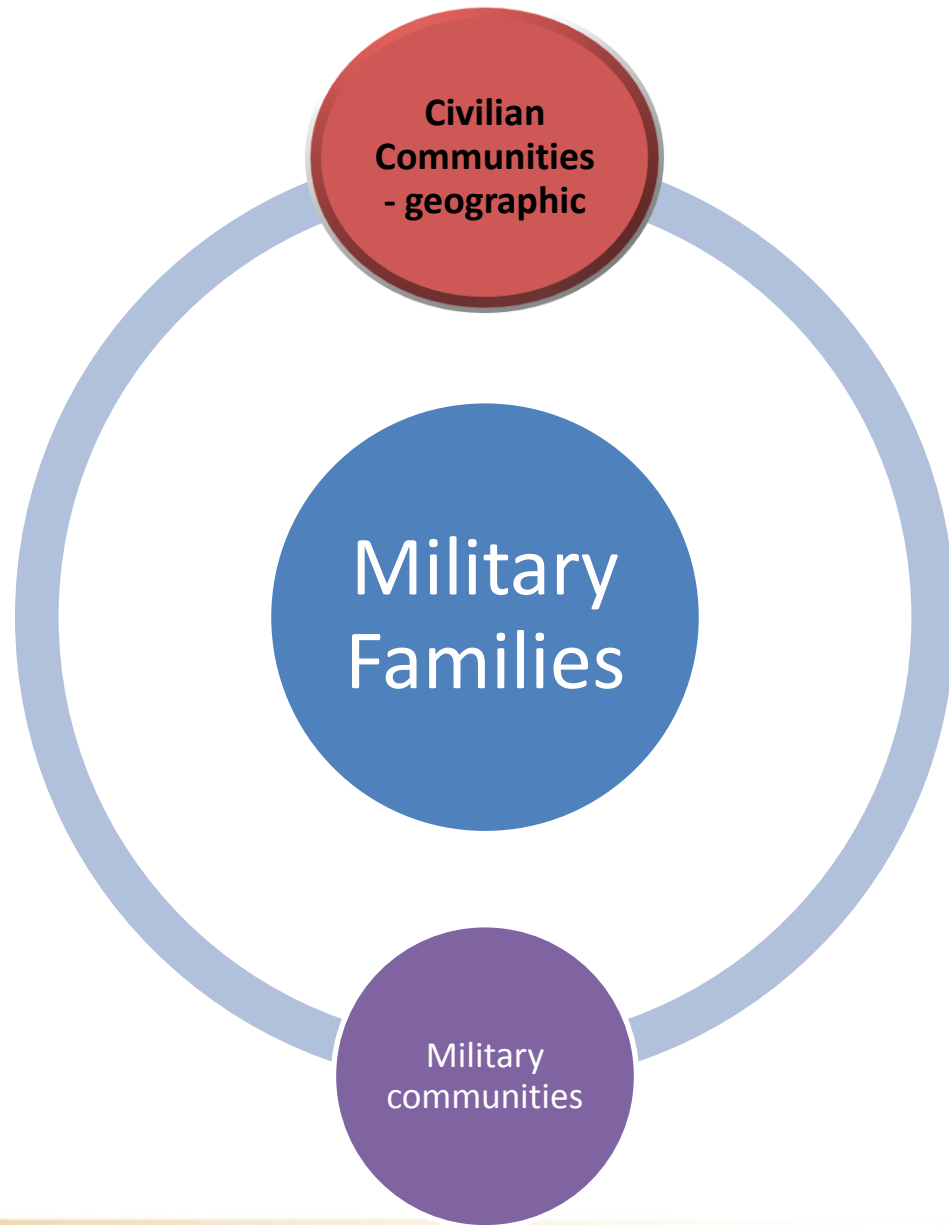
# Operation Diploma Dream

Every College or University ...

- ☑ Is a grantee or an affiliate of Operation Diploma.
- ☑ Is a member of Service Members Opportunity Colleges.
- ☑ Has highly visible points of contact and web pages for student service members and veterans.
- ☑ Gives specific credit for military training and experience.
- ☑ Has implemented successful support and transition programs.
- ☑ Enacts and enforces supportive campus policies.
- ☑ Engages in dialogue about promising practices.
- ☑ Attracts, retains, graduates, and places a significantly larger number of student service members and veterans.



# Mobilizing Civilian Communities -geographic



With many adults as veterans, the United States has a long tradition of patriotism. As citizens, we honor the service, commitment, and sometimes the ultimate sacrifice of the men and women who serve our country. We recognize the significance of the selfless service of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines.

The *Our Heroes' Tree*<sup>SM</sup> program provides a forum for libraries to erect heroes' trees to recognize citizens who have served our nation in and times of peace and conflict.

# OUR Heroes' Tree

A Community Outreach Program for Libraries

Sponsored by THE MILITARY FAMILY RESEARCH INSTITUTE at Purdue University

*Created by Marlene Lee and Stephanie Pickup*



Civilian  
Communities  
- geographic



# Community Mobilization Events

- Provided over 4,000 military family members and veterans with benefits, family support and community resource information at the Vietnam Moving Wall in Charlestown, IN.
- April 17, 2010-Partnership with the Clark County American Red Cross to provide a Veteran and Military Family Reception Center during the Thunder Over Louisville Event which will provide information and services to thousands.
- July 5, 2010-Partnership with the Fort Wayne Tin Caps minor league baseball team for Military Appreciation Day. Will provide access to community resources and benefit information to over 8,000 persons.
- August 21, 2010-Partnership with the Gary South Shore RailCats to provide free admission and information to veterans and military families experiencing deployment, homelessness or unemployment.

Civilian  
Communities  
- geographic

# Community Mobilization Networks

- Pooling local organizations and individuals in collaborative efforts to serve local military service members and their families.
  - Create resource materials
  - Support deployment and reunion briefings,
  - Support for family members
  - Support for veterans in crisis

Civilian  
Communities  
- geographic

### St. Joseph County area:

Lacks close proximity to VA hospital or Vet Center  
Preparing for Marine Reserve 2010 deployment  
Armory fluctuations with unit disbands, etc.  
Lack of communication between the service branches or with the community.

### Lake County area

Lack of employment  
No cohesive support system  
No community-based information  
Similar to the Clark/Floyd County area except with Chicago

### Lafayette area

Great Veteran Service Officer, however there are pockets of support throughout the community but lacks community cohesive focus.  
Working on writing personal letters to the local school systems to prepare them for the upcoming local deployment. Will include resources State, National and local resources.

### Terre Haute area

Extreme need for 24 hour, weekend childcare due to Air Guard 24 hour weekend drills.  
Lack of community information on how to help military families  
Need assistance working with employers and community boards to help military service members transition to civilian employment

### Evansville area

Marketing of services for military families  
Establishing support systems in schools

### Ft. Wayne area

Working on promoting military family issues  
Identifying ways to create a community spirit to support military families  
Creating triage questions for 211 to channel military families to services specifically for military members and families

### Muncie area

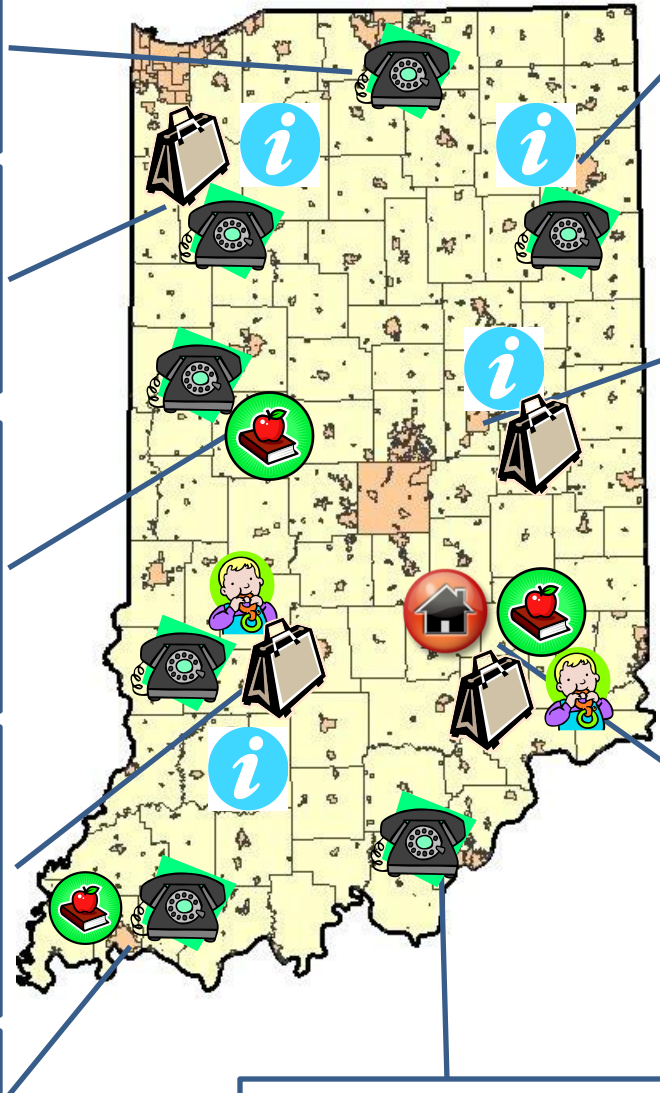
Lack of community information on how to help military families  
Would like assistance working with employers and community boards to help with the transitioning of military service members back to civilian employment

### Columbus area

Preparing for a large influx of active duty, from all branches, in to the rural Indiana area over the next 6 months.  
Due to last falls floods, there is no housing  
Lack of community childcare  
Lack of employment for the spouses, however with the changes at Camp Atterbury and Muscatatuck there may be an increase in civilian jobs over the next 5 years  
Local schools not prepared for a large influx of DOD students

### Clark/Floyd County area

Close proximity to Louisville-calls themselves the step-sister  
Many resources are attached to Louisville, but many of the helping agencies in this area are state and or local  
Creates conflict when trying to assist service members or families, because they will be pulled temporarily to Louisville and then have to restart the process again when they come back because they have crossed state lines.-Lapse of services





# Mobilizing Civilian Communities - professional



# Strengthening Civilian Communities

- Training
  - Psychological health workers
  - Physicians
  - Attorneys
  - Employers

Civilian  
Communities  
- professional



## Did you know?

- Over 17,000 children in the State of Indiana have a parent serving in the National Guard or Reserves and could be impacted by a military deployment.
- Children have not only parents, but siblings, aunts and uncles, and grandparents.
- Every county in our state is impacted by military deployment. You may have a child in your child care center who has a parent in the military.

# HOW to HELP

## *Military Families as a Day Care Provider*

## Introduction

Military deployments are a reality for the entire family. Based on their experiences and developmental needs, the response to the deployment of their military parent in a day care setting can have unique challenges.

## Did you know?

- Of the 1.5 million U.S. soldiers who have served in Middle East conflicts, 25% are National Guard or Reservist service members and will return to the civilian workforce following deployment.
- Service members often bring a unique skill set and values to the job market.
- The Department of Defense estimates that 92% of service members use college degrees.
- Employment of a veteran can result in a monetary benefit to employers in the form of tax incentives.

## Introduction

After completing their service, military members re-enter the workforce with job skills and experience. They are often appealing for employment opportunities.

# HOW to HELP

## *Military Families as an Employer*

## Did you know?

- With more than 4,000 National Guard and Reserve soldiers currently deployed from Indiana, you are likely to encounter families impacted by deployment in your faith community. These families often rely heavily on the support of their congregations and other faith-based organizations.
- In Indiana, every county is currently affected by deployment.
- The transition from civilian life to military service and back again takes both a physical and emotional toll on soldiers and their families. Support during this time is critical.

## Introduction

One of the factors that shapes a community is the connection between the local faith organizations and the social support they offer during times of crisis and peace. With the country involved in a global conflict, the need for support is greater than ever.

# HOW to HELP

## *Military Families as a Faith-Based Organization*

## Practical Applications

- Learn about the local military families in your community. Focus on who are they, where they live and what their needs are.
- Identify what other religious-based organizations are doing to support military members and their families within the community.
- If there is a large concentration of military families in your community, consider starting support groups for spouses, parents of single military members, and children and teens. Each group has unique needs and views on having a loved one in the military.
- Work with local Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) to offer child care activities or meeting space for their meetings and trainings.
- Make contact with local unit chaplains or military personnel officers to offer assistance or to learn about the needs of local families. You may be able to "adopt" single military members who don't have local support or contact. You could also adopt a family.

Civilian  
Communities  
- professional

# Generating New Knowledge



# MFRI Research Themes

- The experiences of military children
- Interaction with the health care system
- ‘Families on the Fringe’
- Family processes of reintegration

# ***Sesame Workshop***

## ***Talk, Listen, Connect***

### ***For Families Dealing with Changes***

- N=153 families with a wounded member
- Randomized pre-post test design with a 'test' kit and a 'comparison' kit; all data were caregiver self-report
- Caregivers who used the test kit were more likely to report that the kit:
  - was helpful to them and to the injured family member
  - Increased their comfort level in helping their child cope with the injured family member

- Caregivers who used the test kit also reported increased use of specific parenting skills:
  - acceptance of child's expression of negative emotions,
  - responding when child requested help,
  - using less verbal prohibitions;
  - more able to reassure their child that the injury was not anyone's fault
- Positive changes in the home environment were also reported for the test group:
  - decreased commotion, disturbance, and noise,
  - less rushing,
  - better implementation of family plans and
  - a regular routine.

# Children's Markers of Insecurity



	Less responsive mothers	More responsive mothers
Income	.00	<b>-.66*</b>
Mother's distress	<b>.43*</b>	
Deployment status		
Going in next 6 mos.	-.24	<b>-.55*</b>
Returned in past 3 mos.	-.31	
Father has been in combat	<b>.47*</b>	.20
Days father deployed in past year	.07	-.02
Total deployments during child's life	.08	<b>.22*</b>

When moms were less responsive, their distress and dad's combat really mattered.

(Standardized Regression Coefficients)

# Children's Markers of Insecurity



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Mother's distress	<b>.43*</b>	.21
Deployment status		
Going in next 6 mos.	-.24	-.55*
Returned in past 3 mos.	-.31	-.42*
Father has been in combat	<b>.47*</b>	.20
Days father deployed in past year	.07	-.02
Total deployments during child's life	.08	<b>.22*</b>

When moms were more responsive, financial resources and deployment history mattered more.

(Standardized Regression Coefficients)

## ***Interaction with the Health Care System***

- Called every TRICARE mental health provider in Indiana
- Goal: To assess the accuracy of the provider list. To the extent that the list is inaccurate, care is less accessible
- 75% of providers were unreachable, duplicate records (offices), no longer accepting TRICARE, or not accepting new patients



# ***Families on the Fringe:***

## ***Make sure that programs, policies and practices pay sufficient attention to family diversity***

- Diversity in **structure**, such as step-families, single-parent families, dual-service families (including families with non-residential children), and grandparents acting as parents
- Families who include members of cultural or ethnic **minority** groups, including foreign spouses
- Families of **single or female** service members, with or without children
- Families with other kinds of diverse or special needs



# The Challenge of Reintegration

- In the past decade while over 3 million deployments by 1.8 military service members
  - Armed Forces Surveillance Center (AFSC), 2009.
- Deployment is a difficult separation for families.
- Reuniting as a family after deployment ends is also a challenge.
- Reintegration – 1<sup>st</sup> year after deployment
  - strengthening family relationships,
  - renegotiating roles, and
  - adapting to life away from a war zone.

# Why is Reintegration Hard?

- Effects of Deployment on the Service Member
  - Living and Working in a Combat Zone
    - psychological, emotional effects, such as PTSD and depression
    - physical effects, TBI and other wounds and injuries
  - Being away from family and missing important family events (Newby et al., 2005)

# Why is Reintegration Hard?

- Roles Shift at Deployment
  - Parents
  - Spouses
  - Children
- At Reintegration, Roles Change Again to Make Room
  - Shift back to previous role configuration?
  - Negotiate new role configuration?

# Not an automatic “Happily Ever After?”

- Service Member has changed
- Family Members have changed
- Family has learned to make do without the service member
  - Reintegration signifies another demand for shifting roles and responsibilities in the family to make room for the service member who has returned.

# The Work of Reintegration

- Resumption of roles and responsibilities;
- Relational communication and expectations,
- Transition from soldier to civilian

(Faber et al, 2008)



# Reintegration Struggles

- Martial Discord
  - Sayers, Farrow, Ross, and Oslin (2009) found that over half of the returning veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan reported martial discord in the first two years home.
- Interactions with Children
  - MacDermid et al. (2005) found that returning fathers had difficulty when interacting with their children during the reintegration period.
  - About 25 percent of returning veterans from Iraq or Afghanistan reported that their children acted afraid of them or did not act friendly around them (Sayers, et al., 2005).



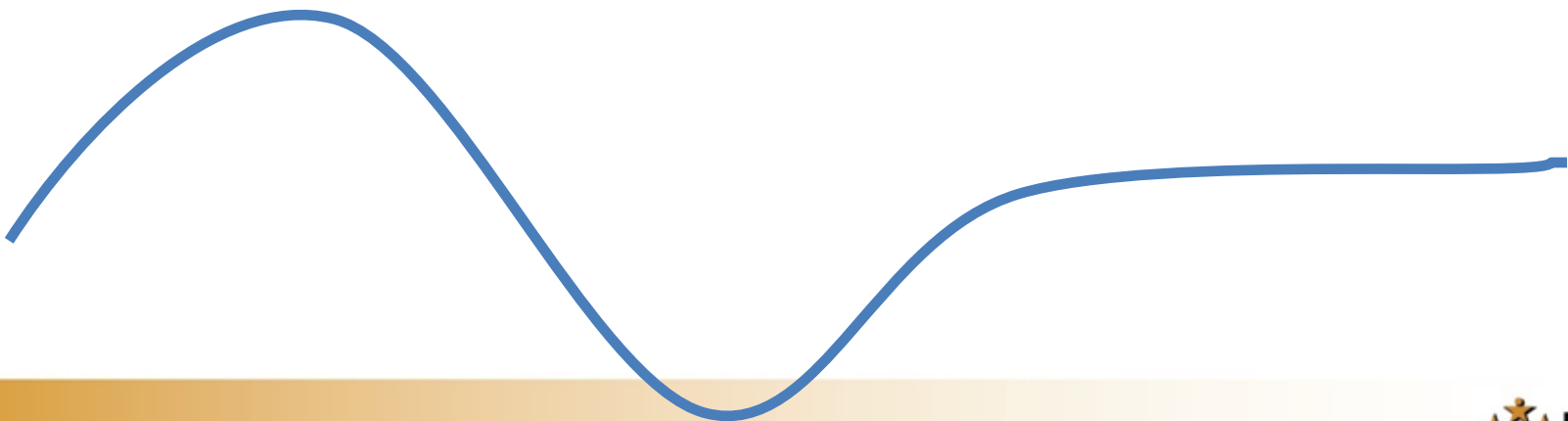
# ***MFRI Studies of Reintegration***



- Qualitative: Small and real-time
  - Service members and family members in one small Indiana unit interviewed separately in their homes up to 7 times during the first year following return from deployment
- Quantitative: Large, retrospective
  - Hundreds of service members surveyed about their recollection of events and experiences during the months since their return.

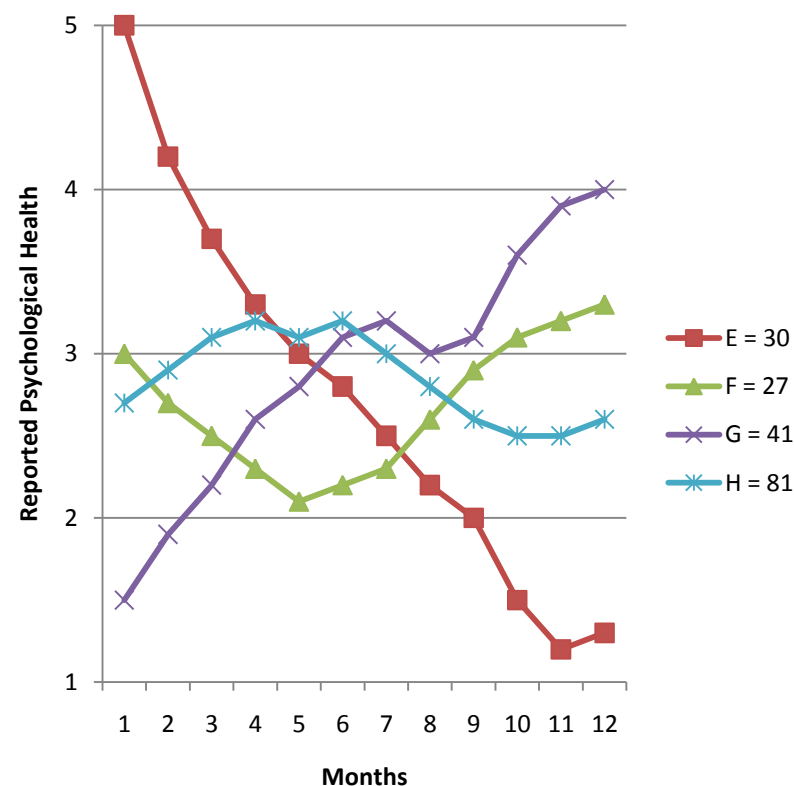
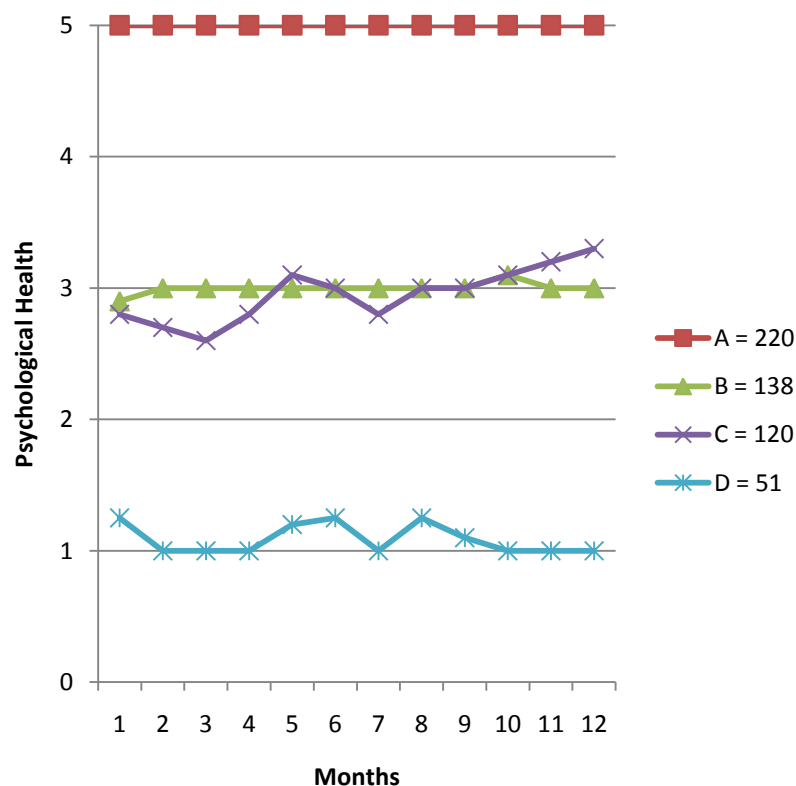
# “Typical” Pattern of Reintegration

- Reintegration takes three to six months and
  - emotionally positive homecoming,
  - followed by a honeymoon period
  - ends with re-stabilization.



# ***'Unpacking' Reintegration***

Service members recalling their general psychological well-being each month during first year home (Willerton, 2009)



# Unpacking Reintegration

- Reintegration can look different across families.
- Grounded in family and developmental theory
- Outcomes of successful reintegration which can be measured.

# What is successful reintegration?

(1 of 3)

- **More than absence of pathology**
  - **Good psychological health**
    - Transmission of trauma response symptoms from the service member to the spouse and children  
(Arzi, Solomon & Dekel, 2000; Dekel & Goldblatt, 2008).
    - Child outcomes are strongly linked to how well the non-deployed parent deals with the deployment  
(Chartrand, Frank, White, & Shope, 2008; Chandra et al., 2010).
  - **Good physical health**
    - Children of deployed service members elevated weight and cardiovascular symptoms compared to civilian and non-deployed  
(Barnes, Davis & Treiber, 2007).
    - Family caregivers limit their own well-being

# What is Successful Reintegration?

(2 of 3)

- **Couples have a satisfying, functional relationship with their spouse or partner**
  - Trauma exposure can affect relationship satisfaction (Goff, Crow, Reisbig, & Hamilton, 2007)
  - Marriage can also buffer the affects of trauma (Bradbury, Fincham & Beach, 2000)
- **Parents have positive relationships with their children**
  - Over half of all service members have children (DoD Demographic Report, 2008)
  - Child Outcomes are Linked to Parent Functioning (Chartrand, Frank, White & Shope, 2008; Flake, Davis, Johnson & Middleton, 2009; Chandra et al., 2010).



# What is Successful Reintegration?

(3 of 3)

- **Functioning Social Support Network**
  - Better mental and physical health (Ren, Skinner, Lee & Kazis, 1999)
  - Increased problem-solving tactics (Markstrom, Marshall, & Tryon, 2000).
  - Protective to developing PTSD (Charuvastra & Cloitre, 2008),
- **Good performance in a satisfying occupation**
  - Reservists Returning to Work (Faber, 2008)
  - Spouse participation in the labor forces drops leading up to deployment (Savych, 2008).
- **Adequate Financial Resources**
  - On average, military families have less income than civilian families (Hosek, Asch, Fair, Martin & Mattock, 2002)
  - 46% of military spouses endorsed stressors stemming from managing or maintaining family or personal finances (Warner, et al., 2009).

# Thinking About Pathways to Successful Reintegration

- Hill (1949)
  - Three Phases
    - Disorganization
    - Recovery
    - Final Organization
  - Diverse patterns of adjustment across families
  - Predictors of the success or downfall
    - Family Adequacy
      - Preparation for separation and reunion
    - Amount of Hardships
    - Family Type

# Thinking About Pathways to Successful Reintegration

- Contemporary Thinkers
  - Logan (1987)
  - Pincus et al (2003)
  - Morse (2006)
- 5 or 7 stages
  - Experience roughly the same emotions and
  - Progress through them in roughly the same order.



# ***Thinking about Diversity in Reintegration***

- Family Response to Stress
  - Loss (threat) of resources produces stress
  - Response to stress is contextual
    - Existing resources and perceived threat to them
  - Individuals with low resources are most vulnerable
- Hobfoll (1989, 2001)

# ***Thinking about Diversity in Reintegration***

- Relationship between Stress and Family Functioning
  - Family Stress is normal, but disruptive
  - “Pile-up of Demands” can feel like family crisis
  - A family’s adaptation to stress can be bon-adaptive or mal-adaptive

(McCubbin & Patterson, 1981;  
Lavee, McCubbin, & Patterson, 1985)

# ***Thinking about Diversity in Reintegration***

- Families exist within a complex network of dynamic systems
  - Family Structure
  - Social and Community Dynamics
- Variety in these systems can have a positive or negative influence on family responses
- Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2006)



# ***Thinking about Diversity in Reintegration***

- Families can proactively participate and successfully overcome the challenges of the reintegration period
- Development is not independent but interdependent on shared relationships or linked lives
- Elder (1991); MacLean & Elder, (2007).

# Learning from Other Transitions

## ***Moderators Enhancing Positive Trajectories***

- Level of education
- Familial involvement
- Positive and effective communication skills
- Effective parenting or interpersonal skills
- Feelings of control over current situation

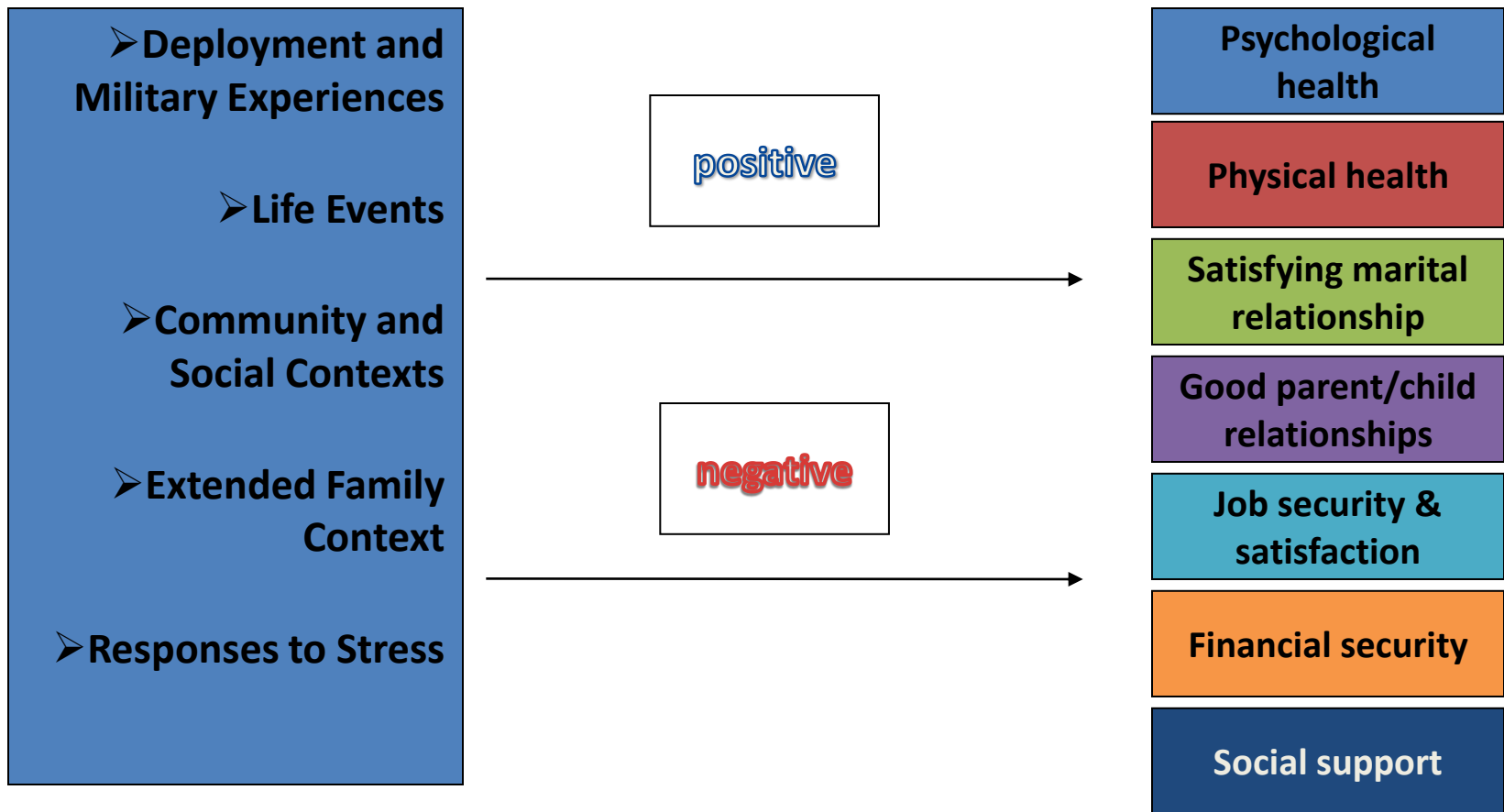
## ***Moderators Weakening Negative Trajectories***

- Employer support and flexibility
- Ability to maintain identity
- Manageable levels of stress or fatigue
- Appraisal of post deployment life
- Strategies or ability for managing anger

# Thinking about Diversity in Reintegration

- Coping
  - Efforts to manage demands that exceed resources
    - Lazarus and Folkman (1984)
- Dyadic Coping
  - Taking into account the stress felt by another
    - Bodehman, Pihet, & Kaser (2006)
- Proactive Coping
  - Prepare in advance to address stressor(s)

# Understanding Reintegration Trajectories



# MFRI as a Force Multiplier





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**QUESTIONS PLEASE**